

THE MESSAGE

The Lutheran World Federation in session at Lund, Sweden, extends Christian greetings to all congregations and assemblies to which this message may come. Grace and peace in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

As representatives of Lutheran churches from all parts of the world, we express first of all our profound gratitude to the great Head of the Church, that in these days of tension and distraction in the world He has permitted so great a company of fellow-Lutherans to gather together in harmony and Christian love. Before the altar and pulpit our hearts have been knit together and we have sealed enduring bonds of fellowship with one another as children of God in Christ.

The federation of the Lutheran churches of the world has now become a reality. Based on solid scriptural foundations, it has been formed in Christian faith and love. This brings to fulfillment at last a great dream that for centuries has lived in the hearts of Lutheran people. It provides us with opportunities for united witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It establishes ties of fellowship and co-operation among many millions of Lutherans in nations all over the world. Already sixty-six churches in twenty-six nations have expressed their adherence to this fellowship. Here is a bond that with God's guidance may become a great blessing.

We began our Assembly with sermon and sacrament in an historic sanctuary. Together in the venerable Cathedral of Lund we bowed our hearts in penitence before our God. At this first significant gathering of Lutherans since the war, we were keenly conscious of our failure in our mission to the world. From the pulpit we received with ready minds the admonition to allow the peace of God to rule in our hearts. This peace is the forgiveness of sins. It is given by God's grace alone, and it is received by faith alone. From the altar we received with sanctified hearts a greeting that may be yours in your sanctuary: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Body and Blood ye have received, preserve you unto everlasting life. Go in the peace of the Lord."

Prayers directed to the Throne of Grace in some thirty tongues

bore witness to our unity of faith. The echoes of historic hymns, sung in several languages together, resounded through every session of the Federation Assembly and attested our harmony in the bonds of peace. Our community of faith and worship—so many men and women from so many lands and tongues—seemed a real foretaste of that glorious day when we shall see “a great multitude which no man can number, out of every nation and of all tribes and tongues, standing before the throne and the Lamb.” Our sessions concluded in the spirit of humble Christian joy and with a deep sense of new responsibilities for us all before our God and our Saviour.

During these sacred days we have pondered with the utmost seriousness our duty as a church to a world in confusion. It became clear that all of us must cultivate a more profound faith, a more vigorous testimony, and a more energetic co-operation in Christian service.

We desire to walk in peace and co-ordinated purpose with Christian churches of whatever name. Yet there arose among us here in frequent repetition the determination to understand more fully and to hold more firmly the heritage of the Lutheran Reformation. So will we cultivate our faith.

For many among us this testimony to our faith will mean suffering, yet more suffering. One who has already endured much was heard to say: “It must be made clear to all the world that the power of our common faith is stronger than that which divides races and peoples. While nations still contend about their future status and the peace of the world, peace already reigns among those who pray to the same Lord.” Another whose face was lined with the reality of pain left this greeting: “Suffering will be sure to come. Help us as you can, but above all, pray for us. We will do the suffering.”

From those who have languished in prison cells, in dungeons, and behind barbed-wire barricades, came the cry: “Back to the Bible!” They have discovered the Old Testament as the Word of God in very truth. They have learned to know the apostles of the New Testament as their own contemporaries, as they have faced the evil in the hearts of men, and as they have witnessed the power of God to save.

Again and again the Assembly at Lund received concrete testimony that the Confessions of the Lutheran church have proved to be in our very day a power which upholds and sustains men in times of

utmost trial. Over and over the spirit of the gathering could be expressed in the words: "Forward to Luther! Forward to Christ and the Prophets and Apostles!"

The Lutheran World Federation presents no easy remedy for the ills of the world. We propose no system of outward control for lives that are centered in self and dominated by sin. The only answer is truth—the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. He came to make known the loving heart of God the Father. He came to die on the cross that God as He really is and man as he really is might be reconciled. He reveals the eternal destiny of the sons of God in glory. But as sons of our Father we are brothers to all men dwelling in this troubled world. We are participants with them in all its blessings and all its woes.

It was gratifying to learn that some of our sister churches which lay prostrate at the close of the war are slowly beginning to lift their heads. Many are the hands that have been outstretched to help. The need continues to be immeasurably great, but the ties of brotherly affection have been made very concrete and very strong, and we are determined to continue to express our faith in our help to one another.

We call on all our fellow-believers around the whole world to join with us in accepting the responsibilities of this unity in faith, this fellowship in blessing, and this community of suffering. Like Israel, confronting the ruined walls of Jerusalem, we must arise and build.

Each one must build the wall that is over against his own house. Each must help with the whole. There is no one so strong as not to need the help of his neighbor. There is no one so weak as not to be able to strengthen his brother's heart and hand.

The peace of God be with you all.

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

In Conference Assembled at Lund, Sweden

June 30 — July 6, 1947